

# Job Reed's Letters

LIFE IN LETHBRIDGE

1886 - 1906



SPECC  
FC  
3698.4  
R43  
C.4

OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 9  
**WHOOOP-UP COUNTRY CHAPTER  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ALBERTA**

P.O. BOX 974  
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA  
T1J 4A2

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Reed, Job, 1841-1906

Job Reed's letters : life  
in Lethbridge, 1886-1906

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father from the original owner, Sam Brady, while another son and a son-in-law had homesteaded in the vicinity and operated small ranches. As an investment, Mr. Reed had built a stone duplex at what is now 1252 and 1254 Sixth Avenue South. (The building, its stones covered by stucco and wood, was still in use in 1978.) He was survived by seven children, viz., Richard William (Will), Charles Henry (Harry), Mary Elizabeth Farthing, Job Junior (Budd), George William Hobbs (George), Hannah Maria (Annie, who was the first white baby to be born at Woodpecker, now Barnwell, Alberta), and Ellen Georgina (Ella), and by his wife, Mary Elizabeth. Another son, Wilfred Cornelius, who was the first white baby to be born in Dunmore, died at the age of only two weeks in May 1885.

Mr. Reed played an active role in community affairs and was a candidate for councillor at the first election held in the newly-incorporated Town of Lethbridge in 1891. (He was one of seven candidates defeated.) Active in the Agricultural Society for many years, he was elected to the Board of Directors in 1901, and was a frequent winner at the annual Agricultural Exhibition, which was sponsored by the Society. He was a member of the School Board in 1902 and 1903 and, on January 16, 1903, was appointed a Justice of the Peace. A lifelong member of the Church of England, he was also a member of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows and an honorary member of the Ancient Order of Foresters.

These were notable accomplishments for a man who had arrived in London, Ontario, in 1882 with a wife and five children, and whose total wealth at the time consisted of three gold sovereigns and a little silver.

Job Reed was born on November 12, 1841 in a small agricultural village in Somersetshire, England. His father was the village blacksmith and died when Job was 14 years old. As a result, the boy had to go to work on a farm to help his by-this-time partially blinded and ailing mother.

When 17 years old, Job Reed left the dairy farm where he had worked long hours for four shillings a week and took a series of odd jobs that left him a little time to attend night school. At age 20, he became a civil servant with the Post Office, delivering mail to sub-Post Offices in the country and picking up mail on his return. He got to the end of his morning delivery about 9:00 a.m. and started back about 4:30 p.m.

At the end of the delivery route was a parochial school and, as he had nothing to do all day, he offered to give some assistance at the school. For seven years, Mr. Reed coached students in arithmetic, algebra, and other subjects, most of which he had learned by himself. In 1869, he married Mary Hobbs. In 1870, a national education act was passed, a requirement of which was that, in order to teach, all teachers had to be examined and to obtain a certificate. Mr. Reed passed his examination, was accepted as a teacher at the school, and, because his wife also was earning a salary as a music teacher, was able to give up the Post Office appointment.

But by May 1873, Job Reed had developed a persistent cough and, as his father had died of consumption, decided to emigrate to a warmer climate. The family sailed from Liverpool to New Orleans, then took a river steamer to the town of Rodney, Mississippi. There Mr. and Mrs. Reed obtained teaching certificates and appointments at the local school. Two years later, the family moved to Wills Point, Texas, and taught there for a time. However, the hot, humid climate was oppressive and, in December 1877, the family sailed for home.

Conditions in England were not at all favorable and it was only with the greatest difficulty that Mr. Reed secured a second mastership at a city school at a salary of fifty pounds per year, later fifty five, then sixty pounds. Dissatisfied, and desirous of farming, there seemed to be but one course of action open to Job and Mary Reed--emigration to some country where land was free or very cheap. After considering New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, they decided on Canada.

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record of. After the first two weeks we began to feed the cattle with hay and kept it up thinking that it could not last much longer until the hay was nearly all gone; then we turned some over to the coulee and got bran to feed the balance but they got weak and when the grass began to spring up three or four more died. One of them I paid seventy-five dollars for; but the worst of all Dollie died. I mean the one I bought at Dunmore, the best butter cow I ever saw. We got seventeen pounds of butter from her in one week at Woodpecker in her second season. If I had bought bran from the first and fed it with the hay, I need not have lost one, I mean from hunger. I lost thirty-six head of cattle altogether.

The A.R. & C. Co. had a terrible time. Their road was blocked up with snow so that in March it took nearly three weeks for one train to go one hundred and nine miles; they employed every man they could get to go on the trains to keep the road clear of snow, paying extra for overtime and giving them their board. I made sixty dollars in one month that way.

One of my tenants left the house in the fall and went to live nearer his business, and as my two younger sons were old enough to mind the cattle and help in the garden I still worked for the Company. The same tenant came back the next spring and rented the house for about eight months so I have had no difficulty so far in keeping up the monthly payments on the property. I would rather be working at home than for the Company, it is not half so monotonous, because at home when I get tired of one job I can change and a change is as good as a rest; but here it is one continuous rub from seven in the morning until twelve when the engine whistle blows for dinner; and again from one until six at night, the same monotonous rub. I live quite a mile from the work and have to sit down to breakfast at six o'clock summer and winter alike. It always takes an hour at night to get home, wash, and have supper, and then in winter I am too sleepy to read much, and in summer I work in the garden as long as I can see.

We had a very favourable season last summer and what is more interesting still is that the C.P.R. has bought the A.R. & C. Co's line of rail from Dunmore to Lethbridge, and during the past summer it was converted into a broad gauge line by the A.R. & C. Co. and then turned over to the C.P.R. whose cars came into Lethbridge on the 23rd of November; it made another little stir and boom here because the coal can be sold in eastern towns at a cheaper rate and for that reason it is expected that much of it will be sold. The C.P.R. has also obtained the Charter to extend this road westward through the Crow's Nest Pass and on into the great mining regions of British Columbia. When that extension is made it will not make a greater demand on Lethbridge coal for it is said that the district about that pass, and especially in the Pass, contains more coal per acre or mile than any other spot in the world, there being not only more beds one above another but thicker beds also than can be found elsewhere, but it will open up a splendid market for farm and garden produce from southern Alberta which at present is chiefly got from the States, and they have to pay duty for bringing it in.

All departments of the A.R. & C. Co. were very busy but none more so than the store, and as soon as the extra work began last spring the manager asked for extra assistance and they sent me in there and I have been working in the store ever since until now; and now I shall have to go back to my old job, that is on the Section, or keeping the road in good shape so as to prevent accidents. I am not working today, New Year's Day is as much a holiday here as Christmas Day. We have spent a very pleasant Christmas Season this year, as indeed we have every year that we have been in the country, except the one before referred to. I have no more to tell you at present, so will conclude with best wishes from

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I am again writing to tell you of my progress. Coal of an excellent quality had been discovered [at Coal Banks, later Lethbridge] about one hundred and nine miles west of Dunmore, that is the next station west of Irvine, and a railroad had been contracted for and the first fifteen miles of grading done in the fall of 1884 ready to start in spring to finish the road to the Coal Banks. [This was the narrow gauge line from Dunmore to Lethbridge, which was completed in August 1885.] Spring came and the bookkeeper came back to take charge of the sawmill as manager, and I knew by his manner and a few hints which I got from men that he did not want anybody there in authority who had been there before him, so I gave a month's notice to leave and asked for a settlement. I had taken no wages since September and had advanced some money twice during the winter so they were owing me over three hundred dollars. However I had no difficulty in getting a settlement, and I moved to Dunmore and built a little house of two rooms to be ready to start work on the new railroad. The coal mine where friend Barnes worked all winter closed down in spring and he also came to Dunmore. As soon as the work started there was a scarcity of water; although there was a fine brook about a half mile away; and I went in to Medicine Hat and bought a cart that had been made especially for hauling water for those who were needing it [at 35¢ per barrel] and in this way during the four months we lived at Dunmore they earned a hundred and thirty dollars. I worked all summer for two dollars a day. In June I bought a heifer and calf. The heifer turned out to be the best for milk and butter that I ever saw. We used a little milk and raised the calf, and sold the balance of the milk to a man who was selling hop beer. He paid us fifty cents a gallon for it and sold it at ten cents a glass, and by the time we came up here in September we had made fifty three dollars off the milk.



Mrs. Job Reed with son George and daughter Annie.  
The picture was taken at Woodpecker  
(now Barnwell) where Annie was born.

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The two went away from here together and I have just got a letter from the old manager who travelled south from here through all the United States territory right to the Gulf of Mexico to see what the country is like for ranching, that is for stock raising; but as he found no place that could be compared with the Cypress Hills district he is coming back here in the spring.

He and his son will take a free grant of 160 acres and a preemption of 160 acres each for which they will have to pay one dollar an acre. They will also lease three sections of land from the government so they will have 2560 acres and will keep their cattle outside their fence in summer and inside in winter.

Their ranch will be about half way between here and the Hills. The sawmill closed down for winter at the end of October and men went into the logging camps, that is to cut logs and haul them down to the lake ready to start the mill in spring. My friend Barnes with his wife and son came in and went west about thirty miles where a coal mine had just started.

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Construction camp at end of track, 1883.

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# Job Reed's Letters

LIFE IN LETHBRIDGE

1886 - 1906



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OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 9  
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